1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

142 individuals. The prognathous jaw is common, but far from universal; and one fairly often meets fair individuals with pointed faces tapering towards the chin. Young girls are frequently [304] graceful, light in colour, and, but for the disfigurements of tattooing, often pretty; but with age and child-bearing, long journeys to the market and heavy field work, they soon coarsen and darken. [551] Colour varies from nearly black to pale copper; but really black skins are uncommon enough to give rise to names or nicknames. The copper complexion is perhaps commoner among the Bison-horn than the Hill Marias, but the really pale copper face is more often met in the hills. Lips are full rather than thick. Eyes are almost invariably brown; I have met occasional individuals with grey or greenish-grey eyes accompanied by hair of a dirty rust colour and light complexions. The hair is black and generally straight, but many have natural waves that would do credit to European coiffeurs, and a few have naturally frizzy hair. Some young 'bloods' [302] among the Bison-horn Marias seem to have artificially curled hair. [164] The teeth are usually worn down, discoloured and neglected, and caries is common. The richer Bison-horn headmen sometimes have [304] small gold plugs, the size of a pin's head, inserted in the front of their upper front teeth.

[516] The bodies are usually well developed, and the easy, upright carriage of the Maria displays to advantage his good chest, buttocks and calves. The Hill Maria seldom if ever carries

482 **Physical powers and endurance** weights on his head, but on his left shoulder, supported by his left arm bent over the top of his burden. Actually he regards the woman as the natural carrier, as may be seen when he goes with her to the market, and almost the only time when he may be seen carrying loads is when he acts as a carrier for a touring official. It is actually recorded that at one time he used to send his women for this work; but he has long given this up, possibly through experience of the less pleasant ways of subordinate State servants. Young hill girls and women carry heavy baskets or leaf-boxes of grain, logs of wood, water-pots or other weights on their heads, generally supporting the burden with their left hands holding its upper edge above their heads. With 479 loads of grain for sale, and perhaps piles of baskets, brooms or mats, 484 the Hill Maria housewife will go once a month to the bazaar, often from thirty-five to forty miles away, in the plains, while her menfolk take nothing but bow and arrow or, very occasionally, big baskets [462] made for storing grain, which only males may make. From Kurmer, for example, on the Kutru-Antagarh border where the hill-streams begin to flow south to the Indrawati, they go thirty-nine miles to the market at Dhaural, between Narainpur and Chhota

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
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Dongar, sleeping the first night at Orcha, twenty-five miles from Kurmer, descending in the morning fourteen miles to Dhaurai, doing their selling and buying and eating a noon meal, and then return that afternoon to sleep again at Orcha, reaching Kurmer on the third day by noon. And their route is no easy one, but up hill and down dale along rough mountain paths. The men will carry heavy loads balanced at either end of a carrying stick borne on their shoulder, proceeding at a jog trot, for nine or ten miles over similar paths, but stop to drink and paddle at the streams, and get very exhausted if they have to carry weights much farther; on the other hand, after food and an hour's rest they are ready to walk back at once to their villages. Three Hill Marias on my last visit to the hills came to my camp at Itulnar some seventy miles across country, with letters, and met me on the march at 8 a.m. in the hills on the third morning after they had set out, having done twelve miles that morning along an exceptionally arduous mountain path. When the crops are ripe on the *penda* slopes and the men are sleeping there, the women go twice a day to them with their food, and sometimes have a heavy day's reaping as well; the *penda* may be five or six miles away from the village and high above it.

Like the Nagas of the Assam hills, the Hill Marias prefer walking over hilly country to long treks on the plains, and are excellent hill and tree climbers. All the Koitor of Bastar, in fact, are remarkably agile tree climbers, and seem to walk up trees rather than climb.

The Bison-horn Maria is even better developed physically than the Hill Maria, and has similar powers of endurance, though on the level plateau villages he does not become the adept hill climber that every Hill Maria is. He leaves less, however, to his women. He can be seen at his physical fittest when dancing for hours with tireless verve and agility, wearing on his head a heavy head-dress of bison-horns with plumes of peacock and jungle-cock feathers and strings of cowries, with a heavy cylindrical drum of hollowed tree-trunk three feet or more long slung from his shoulders, and sometimes carrying a small son frogwise on his chest. He will carry stick-loads of grain sixty or seventy miles to market in the Godavari valley, for even he makes as yet only little use of carts or beasts of burden; the Hill Maria makes none at all.

The Hill Maria wears nothing but a loin-cloth of coarse cotton in winter, summer and rains, though an occasional man may have a piece of similar cloth big enough to wrap over his shoulders at night, and a few headmen have blankets. His body, therefore, is inured to heat and to great cold; for frosts are frequent in his hills, and even as late as the end of March the thermometer may fall to 42°.

/For travel by ghotul members in the form of ceremonial dancing "expeditions" to neighboring villages, see category 116, pp. 485-520/

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL

VII. The Chherta Dance

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796
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As we have seen, many ghotul do not perform the Pus Kolang dances. Some do not even go to dance the Mahua Dandar. In such places, the chelik concentrate on the Chherta festival. In many other villages, however, the Chherta is danced side by side with the older dances.

The Muria say that at the marriage between Kadrengal and Tallur Muttai the supplies of food and liquor for the visitors ran out, and the chelik assisting at the ceremony were sent to beg for food and liquor from neighbouring villages. They did so, and the marriage was happily completed. The more Hinduized Muria villages and the Hindus of Bastar generally have the same tradition, but they say that the marriage was between Mahadeo and Parvati. I doubt whether the Chherta dance is a genuine Muria dance or very long established in their culture; it is common throughout Chhattisgarh and in the Central Provinces, whence it has probably been imported.

Its attractiveness to the Muria is that it is great fun. It enables them to get a little liquor and have a feast. It is not overshadowed by the catastrophic penalties that come upon those who break the taboos of the serious, dangerous Pus Kolang. For this reason the Chherta has spread widely throughout the centre and east of the Muria territory.

On a Chherta expedition boys and girls go together. They dance in the ghotul of the villages they visit and sleep there. Hosts and visitors entertain one another. The visiting party salutes the elders of the ghotul at night and they then exchange girls for massaging. The visitors, however, take fire from their own village and are supposed to cook for themselves.

During the day the visiting party goes round the village dancing and begging. The leader of the dance is a boy whom they call the Nakta.[1] He is dressed up, sometimes in tattered clothes, sometimes in finery, and wears a grotesque gourd mask. The gourd is generally decorated: two rings are put for eyes, a nose is made of wax, a mouth is cut and a number of grains are stuck in it to look like teeth. A beard of the hair of nilgai or bear is attached below. A bunch of peacock feathers is tied to the top. I saw one mask with a small wax bullock placed above the nose. As the dancers go through the village they stand in a line before each house, and beat the ground with long sticks while the Nakta capers about before them with the most grotesque gestures and antics. Two or more boys carry baskets, and while the others dance these go into the house and beg for liquor, rice, pulse or other food. When they have been round the village the girls who have accompanied them take what has been collected and cook their meal.

On return from the expedition the boys and girls take the Nakta to the nearest stream, roll him in the mud, duck him in the water, and give him *mandia roti*, making him eat it with his head under water.

Besides the Nakta, other diversions enliven the Chherta festival. In Remawand I saw an ingenious toy—a stout bamboo pole was decorated with some excellently carved monkeys climbing up towards a bird perched on the top. An arrangement of strings kept both monkeys and bird in motion (Fig. 123). At Koilibera, there was a similar toy which was taken also on Pus Kolang and other expeditions. At the bottom of the bamboo pole the wood was serrated to make a 'musical rasp', and at the top was a little man.

[1] Nakta is an abusive term meaning 'noseless'. It probably refers to the custom of cutting off an erring wife's nose, for it is usually applied to sexually loose persons. It can also be used in an affectionate playful sense. A Nakti Devi is worshipped in parts of Chhattisgarh.